



*Office of the
City Manager*

City of Salisbury

North Carolina



June 22, 2020

VIA Hand Delivery

Larissa Harper
1075 E. Holly Grove Rd
Lexington, NC 27292

Re: Notice of Pre-Dismissal Conference

Dear Larissa,

This letter is to notify you that I am considering dismissing you from your at-will employment as the Downtown Development Director with the City of Salisbury. This decision is based on a pattern of performance deficiencies during your tenure with the City (Section 5.1 of the Policy Manual).

You were hired October 9, 2017. Until recently, you reported to the Assistant City Manager. In March 2020, based on complaints from the Board of Directors of Downtown Salisbury, Inc. (DSI) about your performance, I required that you report directly to me. Since reporting to me, I have reviewed your performance and have concerns about your ability to lead the Downtown Development Department. These concerns were discussed with you during a meeting with me and the Human Resources Director on Friday, June 19, 2020.

Current Performance Concerns

As part of your performance review, consistent with the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the City and DSI, I solicited performance evaluations from the DSI board members that are not City employees. Thirteen members evaluated your performance in six separate categories. Overall, the evaluations demonstrate an inability to perform your job duties up to my expectations or the DSI Board's expectations. In three of the six categories, your performance was rated as "below expectations." Overall, you received 39 ratings of "below expectations," 35 ratings of "meets expectations," and only 4 ratings of "exceeds expectations."

In addition to the DSI performance evaluations, I have reviewed the performance of your department with the City's Parks and Recreation, Communications, and Planning departments, three of the departments that work closely with your department. The sentiment from those departments was consistent with the performance deficiencies in the DSI evaluations. Specifically, there is a lack of organization and timely responsiveness to these departments. These departments also indicated that there is a lack of mutual support from your department, in that these departments are frequently helping your department but there is not the same willingness or ability of your department to help theirs.

Also, within your department, your performance deficiencies have been reflected in the performance of your employees. As you know, one of your employees was recently resigned based on performance issues. It is clear from that case that the employee lacked direction and had been allowed to neglect job duties with little corrective action from you as the supervisor. Another of your employees, though capable and eager and hardworking, has indicated that there is a lack of direction from you as a supervisor. The inability of your departmental employees to perform their jobs, or to be able to clearly articulate their job duties, reflects poorly on your ability to lead the department.

History of Performance Concerns

The current performance concerns identified by the DSI Board and by my review of your performance are consistent with the performance concerns reflected in your personnel file, which I have also reviewed.

On September 18, 2018, as part of your initial six month review, you received a memo from your supervisor expressing concerns about your performance—specifically your responsiveness to emails, telephone calls, and work-related matters—and outlining your future performance expectations.

On December 5, 2018, you received a written warning based on concerns similar to those outlined in the September 2018 memo. Specifically, the warning addressed your responsiveness to telephone calls and emails and your tardiness to meetings. The plan for improvement outlined specific duties that needed improvement. In addition, you were informed that if you continued to fail to meet your duties, you would be suspended or possibly terminated.

On January 18, 2019, you received a performance evaluation that reflected similar performance concerns and a total average performance rating of 1.89 out of 3, which is “below satisfactory.” Areas listed for improvement included Ethics, Values and Stewardship. Under “Managerial and Supervisory Competencies,” you received an “unsatisfactory” rating in Relationships (responses to other departments) and Planning and Organization (timeliness).

On June 19, 2019, you received a three-day suspension for Lateness, Failure to Follow Instructions, and Unsatisfactory Work Quality. The reasons for this discipline were substantially similar to the September 2018 memo and the December 2018 written warning, and were also similar to the areas identified for improvement in your performance evaluation from January 2019. In particular, you had failed to respond to emails, you were asked to have a staff member turn in a report on her work activity, which was not completed; you failed to make changes to a PowerPoint presentation after being directed to make the changes; and you were consistently late arriving to work. In addition, you acknowledged in writing that if your performance did not improve, you would be subject to further disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Summary

At the June 19, 2020, meeting, we reviewed all of these concerns. Your responses to my questions about your performance indicated a total unwillingness to accept any responsibility for your performance deficiencies. You blamed other departments, other employees, a lack of direction, and the DSI board. Your inability to acknowledge your pattern of performance deficiencies exhibited during your tenure as director, and your inability to accept any of the

responsibility as your own, is disappointing and indicates that you are incapable or unwilling to perform your job to the standards required of this organization.

Based on my review of your performance history, it is clear that you are not meeting job standards, and that you are not improving in a way that gives me any assurances that you will be able to meet the standards required of you if you remain employed by the City.

Pre-Dismissal Conference

Based on the information in this letter, you are directed to meet with me and a representative from the City's Human Resources Department on **Wednesday, June 24, 2020, at 8:30 am** in **the Human Resources Department at the City Office Building, 132 North Main Street, Salisbury, NC**. At this meeting, I will review all of this information with you and you will have the opportunity to respond to the policy violations before a final decision is made about your employment.

If you do not attend the conference and have not discussed rescheduling, I will make a decision based on the information available. You may contact me by telephone or email or you may contact Souwan Kiengkham by telephone at (704) 638-2116 or by email at skien@salisburync.gov.

Sincerely,



W. Lane Bailey
City Manager

cc: Ruth C. Kennerly, HR Director
Personnel file

I acknowledge that I have received this Notice and understand that my signature below does not imply agreement with this action or the incident(s) identified within this Notice but is an acknowledgement of receipt only.

Employee's Signature: Leanne Harper Date: 06-22-2020